

March 4, 2011

**Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony**  
**Deb Shulansky, *Director of Community Outreach and Support***  
**Brain Injury Association of Connecticut (BIAC)**

My name is Deb Shulansky and I am submitting this testimony as a representative of the Brain Injury Association of Connecticut, in my role as the Director of Community Outreach and Support.

The Governor's Budget calls for the total elimination of the Brain Injury Association of Connecticut's operating grant, which we receive through the Department of Social Services (DSS) under the line item "Services for Persons with Disabilities".

As the Director of Community Outreach and Support, I oversee Brain Injury support groups through-out the State of Connecticut. BIAC sponsored groups offer support to traumatic brain injury survivors, their families and their caregivers. Three support groups specifically meet the needs of Combat Veterans returning from war. All thirty support groups serve an important role in the re-integration of TBI survivors back into the community. Without the funding BIAC receives through the DSS, the existence and continuation of these support groups is at risk.

BIAC also is the only non-profit organization in the State to offer a diverse series of community outreach presentations devoted solely to brain injury prevention and awareness. There is very little public understanding of brain injury or its consequences: The only real cure for a brain injury is prevention.

In 2010, this State passed Senate Bill 456: *An Act Concerning Student Athletes and Concussions*. The Legislation is an important step in concussion management, however many myths regarding concussive injuries remain. In order to decrease the long-term consequences of undiagnosed and untreated concussion, which can result in ongoing and perhaps lifelong disabilities, these myths must be dispelled. BIAC's outreach programs are critical in providing accurate information about the signs and symptoms of concussion and our programs facilitate proper concussion diagnosis and treatment. Since the implementation of the new Legislation, there have been increased requests to BIAC for concussion presentations and information.

In summary, BIAC's operating grant, which we receive through DSS, ensures that brain injury survivors, their families and their caregivers receive support, and that brain injury prevention education programs which are not available elsewhere are in place. We must ensure that these services are not reduced or eliminated altogether, in order to reduce the number of survivors turning to the State of Connecticut for help in the future.

Thank you.